

Standards and Certification: What it means to WIBS



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National Professional Certification in Customer Service® and the Workforce Development System

National Professional Certification in Customer Service is being offered to qualified persons who successfully complete the national assessment. The certification is based on industry skill standards, and benchmarks in customer service as determined by the retail, wholesale, personal services and real estate industries, under the leadership of the NRF Foundation and the National Sales and Service Voluntary Partnership. Thousands of workers and hundred of employers participated in the process to identify these skills over the last 10 years. The assessment is open to all persons who have been through customer service related training, are currently working in customer service jobs, or who feel qualified to take this exam based on their experience and interest. The Workforce Development system is a key partner in providing certification opportunities to its customers.

Standards and Certification Benefits to WIBS include at least the following:

- Certification helps WIBS meet industry expectations and training goals. It provides graduates of training programs, and current employees with an industry benchmark of quality performance.
- Skill standards and certification provide the foundation for consistency in quality training based on industry needs. This in turn supports accountability of public training dollars.
- Certification is a portable credential for workers to market their skills and build a career within and across industries.
- Customer service training supports skill set needs in a wide variety of industries, e.g., retail, hospitality, banking, call centers, public service, health care.
- The use of industry standards and certification reinforce the credibility of the public training system to people needing assistance, and employers seeking qualified workers.

Ways that WIBS can support interest and take-up of certification by business:

- Communicate the availability of national certification in Professional Customer Service to all WIB members. This could be in the form of a presentation at a WIB meeting, and/or written communication for them to share with their HR Directors.
- Identify service related companies willing to send 2 or 3 of their frontline workers to take the certification assessment, and participate in a focus group to discuss it. Companies will be more likely to support their workers testing once they see the relevance of certification to their work place. They will be more receptive to hiring workers from the workforce system who have attained certification.
- Share certification information with local service related business associations.
- Provide an orientation and information session with local training providers to encourage them to refer appropriate participants for the assessment.
- Provide information and orientation to the One Stop staff to support their informing appropriate One Stop participants about certification. Distribute and review certification handbooks.
- Provide the cost of certification assessment to test takers from the WIA system. Cost will be from \$50 to \$70 for the assessment and certification. Upon earning certification, a candidate receives a certificate and lapel pin.
- Support the cost of, or provide proctors, to oversee the assessment process.
- Become an assessment site.

Skill Standards:

Leading the Way to Excellence in Sales and Service



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National Skill Standards In Customer Service and Sales

Skill Standards provide a broadly recognized measurement of success, and provide the tools to prepare people with skills to work across an entire industry sector. The Sales and Service Voluntary Partnership, managed by the **NRF Foundation**, developed Skill Standards in Sales and Customer Service to equip workers with portable skills and certifications they can use to enter and advance in the retail and service related industries. The S&SVP standards are one element of a national system of skill standards and certification.

The standards, approved by the National Skill Standards Board, led to the development of **National, Professional Certification in Customer Service**. The certification assessment is the key to validating an individual's achievement of the required skills to be successful on the job. Certification, available at Retail Skills Centers and other assessment sites throughout the country, provides students and workers with a credential important to career mobility; and employers with a means to identify qualified workers.

What are the Sales and Service Skill Standards?

Skill Standards in Sales and Service are tools that outline the skills, knowledge and abilities needed by professional retail workers to perform their work successfully. Skill standards provide the framework for a training program curriculum that addresses the key elements of retailing. The skill standards address both the work itself (work-oriented components) and the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform the work (worker-oriented components).

The **work-oriented** components examine what needs to be done on the job and how well. The work-oriented components include seven critical work functions, the key activities involved with carrying out these functions, and performance indicators to determine when an individual performs a key activity competently. The following chart outlines the critical work functions, or major responsibilities of the work.

Customer Service Critical Work Functions	Sales Critical Work Functions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learns about products or services 2. Assesses customer needs 3. Educates customer 4. Meets customer's needs and provides ongoing support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Prepares for selling 6. Gains customer commitment and closes sale 7. Develops and implements a sales follow-up plan

The **worker-oriented** components refer to the knowledge, skills and abilities an individual needs to perform the work outlined in each critical work function. The Customer Service and Sales Skill Standards address three categories of worker-oriented skills:

Academic knowledge and skills	Employability knowledge and skills	Occupational and technical knowledge and skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading - Writing - Mathematics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The knowledge and skills generally needed for success in the workplace, such as teamwork, decision-making and problem solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills that are specific to the work itself

Skill standards are useful to employers, employees, educators, labor unions and workforce development professionals. The national skill standards system promotes excellence in customer service and sales and helps to develop a workforce capable of meeting the expectations of high performance companies.

Customer Service Certification:

Professionalize Your Workforce With Industry-based Certification



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Lead the way to National Professional Certification in Customer Service

National Professional Certification in Customer Service is an industry driven and endorsed credential that helps employers identify qualified professionals, and recognizes the qualifications of employees, job seekers, and students.

The computer-based **Customer Service Assessment** is the vehicle to achieving certification; it is the key to questioning and documenting an individual's achievement of the knowledge and skills in the industry-based Customer Service Skill Standards.



The importance of Industry Certification

Industry-based certification demonstrates competency in the most important skills that industry experts require for high performance in their workplace. Certification is derived from a set of skill standards, which spell out the fundamental knowledge, skills, and abilities that both current and prospective employees should have in order to succeed in related jobs and careers.

The National Professional Certification in Customer Service is based on Customer Service and Sales Skill Standards, developed with employers and employees from the *retail, wholesale, personal services, and real estate industries*.

The Certification was designed to capture the core Customer Service duties for a broad range of entry-level through first-line supervisory positions across the sales and service industries. As such, it is appropriate for anyone interested in obtaining a job or pursuing a career in retail and other customer service focused industries. These include workplaces such as retail stores, warehouses, flower shops, hair salons, rental car companies and many more business that value customer service skills. High school and older students, adults, incumbent workers, transitioning and potential employees all can benefit from a portable credential that demonstrates their qualifications as a customer service professional.

About the Assessment

The 70-question Assessment comprises real-life customer service situations, some delivered through video and audio; with questions presenting possible courses of action. The assessment relates to four work functions identified in the Customer Service Skill Standards:

- Learns About Products or Services
- Assesses Customer Needs
- Educates the Customer
- Meets Customer Needs and Provides Ongoing Support

The Assessment is delivered via the Internet; however, it must be proctored and other minimum requirements/specifications must be met. The highly interactive assessment takes about an hour to complete. Candidates receive their score report as soon as they finish the assessment.

Where to take the test

The test can be taken at one of our private assessment sites or at one of our technical partner's testing sites across the country. Companies, schools, and training organizations may apply to become a private assessment site and offer the exam at their testing center. For more information on becoming a site, please contact Shana Mack.